

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 031100Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY SANA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7263

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANA 353

SUMMARY: TWO SHAYKHS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED FOR CIRCULATING A POLITICAL PROGRAM BY MUHSIN AL-AYNI.

1. TWO WELL-KNOWN SHAYKHS, HAMOOD AL-SABRI OF HAIMA, AND YAHYA MU'ADHARI OF ARHAB, WERE ARRESTED LAST WEEK FOR CIRCULATING A POLITICAL STATEMENT BY MUHSIN AL-AYNI. BY SOME REPORTS, AN UNNAMED AIR FORCE OFFICER WAS ARRESTED AT THE SAME TIME AS AN ACCOMPLICE.

2. THE STATEMENT--CALLED "A NATIONAL COVENANT"-- WAS APPARENTLY WRITTEN WHEN MUHSIN AL-AYNI WAS LAST PRIME MINISTER, AND REPRESENTED A BROAD GAUGE ATTEMPT TO CHART A FUTURE POLITICAL COURSE FOR YEMEN, BOTH INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY. WE HAVE NOT SEEN THE DOCUMENT, BUT IT IS PRESUMABLY THE SLIGHTLY LEFTIST AND THIRD WORLD RHETORIC WHICH IS AL-AYNI'S SPECIALITY. WHETHER AL-AYNI, OR HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW SINAN ABU LUHUM, PROMPTED OR AGREED TO THE CIRCULATION OF THE DOCUMENT BY THE SHAYKHS NOW IS NOT RPT NOT CLEAR, BUT A LINK IS WIDELY ASSUMED.

3. AHMED ABDO SAID WAS SAYING BEFORE RURKI MISSION THAT HAMDY HAD DISPOSED OF RIGHT AND COULD THEREFORE TURN TO LEFT, WHO MORE DANGEROUS IN THE LONG RUN.

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NOW HE IS SAYING THAT PRIORITIES HAVE BEEN REVERSED.

AHMED ABDO SAID SAYS THIS DESPITE HIS NEWLY ACQUIRED KNOWLEDGE OF PROSPECTIVE SOVIET ARMS SHIPMENTS, WHICH HE SAYS WILL INCLUDE MIG-21'S. (HE WON'T OR CAN'T SAY WHEN OR HOW MANY.) SAID MAY HAVE REVERSED HIMSELF IN PART BECAUSE OF THE STINGING "MIDNIGHT CABLE" WHICH PRINCE SULTAN SENT THE YARG DEMANDING TO KNOW WHY SAID WAS (ACCORDING TO SAUDI REPORT) IN WASHINGTON TO DENOUNCE SAUDI EFFORTS IN YEMEN. SAID IS CLEARLY TRYING TO REGAIN SOME OF HIS STATURE HERE AFTER BEING SUSPECTED THAT HE OVERSTEPPED HIS LIMITS WITH THE USG. WITH SULTAN COMING TO SANA IN MARCH, AND STILL DEMANDING AN EXPLANATION, SAID FEELS THE NEED TO FORTIFY HIMSELF AGAINST THE RIGHT.

4. THE TREND WE SEE IS AT LEAST A TEMPORARY INCREASE OF LEFTIST ACTIVITY IN YAR, BUOYED BY THE NEW SOVIET ARMS DELIVERIES. UNLESS WE ARE MISTAKEN, HAMDI WILL WANT TO CHECK THIS AS HARD AS HE HAS TRIED TO CHECK THE TRIBES. WE THINK HE WANTS AS MUCH INDEPENDENCE AS POSSIBLY AND IS WILLING TO PLAY THE PRECARIOUS, TEETERING ROLE OF THE MAN IN THE MIDDLE TO SERVE HIS OWN INTERESTS. THUS HE WILL WANT SOVIET ARMS --BUT NOT SOVIET SUPPORTERS--TO PLAY OFF THE SAUDIS, AND HE WILL WANT WESTERN ARMS--BUT NOT SAUDI PROTEGEES--TO PLAY OFF HIS SOVIET-BACKED SOUTHERN NEIGHBORS. RIGHT NOW, IT LOOKS AS IF HAMDI IS GOING TO BE ABLE TO HAVE HIS CAKE AND EAT IT TOO.
RANSOM

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